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20 May 1975

DRAFT

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable Gerald R. Ford
The President of the United States

SUBJECT : The Rescue of the SS Mayaguez and Its Crew

1. The attached is in response to your memorandum of 18 May 1975 requesting the instructions, verbal or written, issued by the intelligence community during the Mayaguez incident.

2. The responses to the other requests in your memorandum will be forwarded by close of business Friday, 23 May.

DIA & DOS & NSC review(s) completed.

W. E. Colby

*NSC Review Completed for Pg 22, para 1 & Pgs 23
THRU 29*

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20 May 1975

DRAFT

INTERAGENCY INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM*

SUBJECT: The Rescue of the SS Mayaguez and Its Crew

The following memorandum covers the instructions, verbal or written, which were issued by the intelligence community during the time of the Mayaguez incident.

* * * * *

1. The National Security Agency (NSA). NSA was prolific both in coverage and instructions to field components during the Mayaguez affair. Tab A contains a listing of all instructions forwarded to NSA field elements prior to and during the Mayaguez incident.

2. The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). During the period of the Mayaguez incident, DIA relied primarily on secure telephone contacts for issuing instructions and making requests, both within the Washington intelligence community and to various field components. Tab B contains a log of DIA activities relating to the Mayaguez affair.

3. Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State (INR). Although INR did not issue any specific instructions to the field for coverage of the capture of the Mayaguez and

* This memorandum was prepared by the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, and the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State.

Approved For Release 2003/10/22 : CIA-RDP83M00171R001800150001-2

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE

reactions thereto, the various policy desks within the Department did put all overseas embassies on alert to report reactions to developments relating to the Mayaguez incident.

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5. The Director of Central Intelligence (DCI). In addition to coordinating the activity of the Intelligence Community during the course of the Mayaguez affair, the DCI levied two tasks on the Intelligence Community Staff: (a) to determine how intelligence procedures relating to the handling of CRITIC messages could be improved; and (b) why intelligence on earlier seizures of vessels had not been forthcoming in time to alert other ships planning to transit near Cambodia. Tab D contains extracts from the DCI's morning meetings with his key staff personnel on these matters. The responses of the Intelligence Community Staff to these two requests appear at Tab E and Tab F.

6. In addition, the National Intelligence Officer for South and Southeast Asia, acting for the DCI, was in constant

TOP SECRET/SENSITIVE

25X1

Approved For Release 2003/10/22 : CIA-RDP83M00171R001800150001-2

secure telephone communication with the various components of the intelligence community to ensure that each agency provided maximum coverage of the Mayaguez affair.

- 3 -

Approved For Release 2003/10/22 : CIA-RDP83M00171R001800150001-2

25X1

25X1

Approved For Release 2003/10/22 : CIA-RDP83M00171R001800150001-2

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Approved For Release 2003/10/22 : CIA-RDP83M00171R001800150001-2

| <u>Time</u> | <u>Description</u> |
|-------------|---|
| 12 May | <p>Asked NOSIC for list of all ships enroute to or scheduled for Cambodian port of Kompong Som (Sihanoukville). Specific info was to include shipname, flag, voyage departure, current location, and cargo, if known.</p> <p>Asked NOSIC for list of all ships within 24 hours steaming time of Gulf of Thailand.</p> <p>Asked NOSIC for details on Cambodian merchant fleet.</p> <p>TELECON to Subic Bay, Philippines requesting debriefing of any refugees with knowledge of Poulo Wai Islands.</p> <hr/> <p>TELECON to U-Tapao Refugee Center for any information concerning Poulo Wai Islands.</p> <p>TELECON to NSA [] re NSA tasking for dedicated coverage of KC comms activity in off shore area. 25X1A</p> <p>TELECON to NOSIC (Mr. Spaulding) requesting information on crew, home port, last port of call and destination of Mayaguez.</p> <p>INDICOM to CINCPAC for information on status of Poulo Wai Islands.</p> <p>Msg USDAO Bangkok requesting info on events of the seizure of Panamanian ship on 7 May.</p> <p>Poulo Wai photo research initiated to identify available aerial photography.</p> <p>121400 EDT DC Memo to JRC, requesting urgent requirement for photo coverage Poulo Wai.</p> <p>121544 EDT J3 message to CINCPAC, requesting continuous P-3 coverage of northern Gulf of Siam multiple RF-4C recce flights of Phnom Penh, Sihanoukville and Poulo Wai, and U-2R coverage of Poulo Wai.</p> <p>121708 EDT (On) DC-5C message to PACOM, SAC and SRC, providing detailed operational guidance.</p> <p>121737 EDT CINCPAC to USSAG - Photo recce request</p> |

TOP SECRET SENSITIVE

Approved For Release 2003/10/22 : CIA-RDP83M00171R001800150001-2

122210 EDT CTG 72.3 message to CTF 72, reporting positive ID of Mayaguez and that surveillance aircraft received hole in vertical stablizer from small arms fire.

122240 EDT. CINCPAC message to Det, 7602 AIRINTG, Bangkok; SPACTYS GP, Bangkok; USDAO Bangkok; and 500th MI GP, Hawaii, regarding urgent debriefing requirement. DC-1 passed copies to Col Pribram for appropriate action.

13 May INDICOM to CINCPAC - urgent request for information from Cambodian refugees on status of Kaoh Tang Island.

Followup INDICOM to CINCPAC requesting any information immediately available to support CJCS requirement. Followup with refugee report.

13 May TELECON to NOSIC requesting information on number and status of Cambodian merchant fleet.

TELECON to State Dept requesting any information on news broadcast reporting that the Mayaguez will be released after "US apologies and return of Khmer aircraft that were flown to Thailand."

INDICOM to CINCPAC from Gen Faurer for info on KC combat strength, and weapons, type and number on Islands. Any info available from pilot debriefing.

TELECON from Gen Faurer to [REDACTED] ISA, on U.S. ability to enter KC radio net.

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130209 EDT CINCPAC message to JCS and CINCPACFLT, recommending consideration of armed escort for RF-4C sorties and instructing CINCPACFLT to maintain continuous surveillance.

130430 EDT CINCPAC response to JCS query for information on Poulo Wai Island.

25X1

130710 EDT



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Approved For Release 2003/10/22 : CIA-RDP83M00171R001800150001-2

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0200

Research later coverage of Poulo Wai & Tang Island
Measurement of Tang Island & Photos

130853 EDT

USSAG/7AF message to CINCPAC, reporting processing and exploitation procedures of P-3 mission imagery. DC-1 queried DI-8 as to DIA requirement for this type imagery and passed requirement on to DC-5C.

130900 EDT

INDICOM from CINCPAC, responding to query, regarding military and civilian personnel, military equipment, and various facilities on island.

1000

Initial measurements to DI/NMCC J-3 of Tang

131345 EDT

SACRECON message - directed continuous 24 hour coverage with OLYMPIC TORCH until further notice.

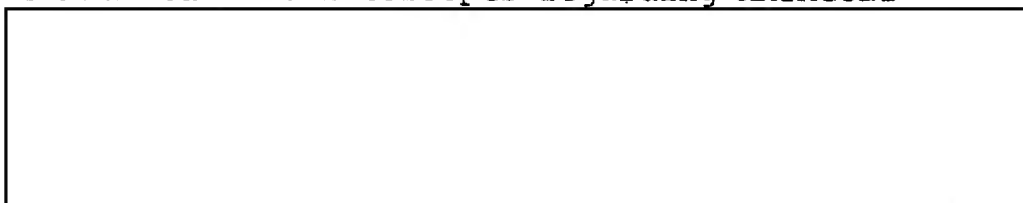
131358 EDT

JCS/J-3 to CINCSAC - Concurred in continuous OLYMPIC TORCH coverage to provide communications link for command and control.

1300-1400

Requested check with NSA on reasons for lack of KC communications intercepts regarding MAYAGUEZ

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1400

Refined measurements to DI/NMCC Adm Gayler Task Force of Tang

131445 EDT

INDICOM Msg fm CINCPAC to DIA stating P-3 photography had arrived Cubi Point and is being read out.

131647 EDT

CINCPAC Msg to JCS - Unless otherwise directed, consider authorization continued for Face Value ops in vicinity of Mayaguez.

TOP SECRET SENSITIVE

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At approx 0900 the DI informed US that the NIO for South and Southeast Asia had identified a private citizen [] that was knowledgeable of Koh Tang Island. We were requested to determine if secure communications could be established with the source and to draw up a set of questions for a debrief. When secure communications could not be established we decided, based on a review of preliminary information, that the source's knowledgeability warranted immediate transportation to the Pentagon for a debrief with the Services, Joint Staff and DIA. Source arrived here at 1530 for a successful debrief.

25X1

131715 EDT

[]
US airt. IPAC estimates one reinforced KC company on Kaoh Tang Island.

1800

Asked NSA what data needed to help in search for KC communications. Requirements passed to CINCPAC for HUMINT collection from knowledgeable former Khmer Navy personnel via INDICOM approx 2000.

131807 EDT

DIADC-5C msg to ARFCOS/CINCPAC concurs in CINCPACs recommended delivery procedures.

131857 EDT

DIRNSA delcares SIGINT ALERT [] for Cambodia.

25X1

131946 EDT

CINCPAC to USSAG/JCS - Photo Recon request: coverage of Koh Tang Island. Expedited preparation and handling via Compass Link requested.

132141 EDT

J-3 msg to CINCPAC - reporting 10 survivors in raft and SAR efforts underway.

132212 EDT

CINCPAC msg to Bangkok Agencies & 500 MI Gp - Stating urgent debriefing requirement - debrief survivors of sunken Cambodian boat.

132325 EDT

CINCPAC msg to COMUSSAG - Requesting daily photo coverage of Kaoh Tang - minimum altitude of 6500' still in effect.

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Approved For Release 2003/10/22 : CIA-RDP83M00171R001800150001-2

TOP SECRET SENSITIVE

Approved For Release 2003/10/22 : CIA-RDP83M00171R001800150001-2

| <u>Time</u> | <u>Description</u> |
|--------------------|--|
| 140054 EDT | NSA msg to DIA - acknowledged DIA requirement for SIGINT coverage relating to Mayaguez. |
| 140207 EDT | CHSPEACTS Bangkok msg to 500 MI Gp - Reporting urgent debriefing requirement for Det K interrogator at Camp Pendleton. |
| 140420 EDT | ACJCS request to DIA for 8x10 photos of Ream afd, Ream Naval base and Kompong Som harbor for use at NSC mtg on 14th. |
| 140437 EDT | CINCPAC msg to COMUSSAG - For photo coverage of Sihanoukville/Kompong Som naval facility and afd and Ream port facility and afd. |
| 140442 EDT | USDAO Bangkok msg to CINCPAC - Stating urgent debriefing request - DAO Bangkok has no capability to fulfill requirement regarding Kaoh Tang Island - Det K, 500 MI Gp will debrief Khmer refugees at Utapao. |
| 140450 EDT | CINCPACFLT msg to CINCPAC - Requesting dupe neg photos of all FACE VALUE missions be positioned at Utapao for use by Coral Sea. |
| 141600 EDT | JCS directs readiness posture for recce support assets. |
| 15 May | Msg to USDAO Bangkok re defection of KC vessel involved in capture of Mayaguez. NSA/State re initial press reports indicating KC were prepared to release US crew of Mayaguez. |
| 16 May 161426 Z | Message to SSO Singapore re debrief of Mayaguez crew. |

TOP SECRET SENSITIVE

Approved For Release 2003/10/22 : CIA-RDP83M00171R001800150001-2

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Approved For Release 2003/10/22 : CIA-RDP83M00171R001800150001-2

TAB C

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MESSAGE HANDLING INDICATOR

STAFF

DATE-TIME GROUP

132158Z

CITE

DIRECTOR

MESSAGE REFERENCE NUMBER

TO: IMMEDIATE

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ILLEGIB

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT IS CONSIDERING WIDE RANGE OF OPTIONS FOR DEALING WITH KHMER COMMUNIST SEIZURE OF VESSEL MAYAQUEZ AND HOLDING IT JUST OFF OF KOH TANG ISLAND, LOCATED ABOUT 30 MILES SOUTHWEST OF KOMPONG SOM. IF IT DECIDED THAT OPTION WHICH IS SELECTED INVOLVES LIMITED MILITARY ACTION AGAINST KOH TANG ISLAND TO INCLUDE LANDING MARINES, THEN IT WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL FOR HQS TO HAVE PROMPT REPORTING VIA IMMEDIATE PRECEDENCE TRAFFIC OF HOST COUNTRY REACTION TO THIS UNITED STATES MOVE. E-2, IMPDET.H

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TAB D

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EXTRACT FROM MORNING MEETING MINUTES OF 13 May 1975

Lehman highlighted the latest reports on the seizure of the U.S. ship Mayaguez by Cambodian armed forces in the Gulf of Thailand. The Director observed that he had been briefed in preparation for the NSC meeting scheduled this morning on this topic. Later in the meeting, Wilson noted that he would be meeting with those responsible for conveying CRITIC messages to Watch Office principals, in light of the President's concern that he and Dr. Kissinger, as well as others, were not immediately advised of the incident. The Director observed that a post-mortem on this matter by [] needs identification of conclusions and some recommendation on how to avoid redundancy in reacting to CRITIC's.

25X1A

EXTRACT FROM MORNING MEETING MINUTES OF 14 May 1975

Lehman updated information on the Mayaguez situation, as reported in today's NID, and called attention to an unconfirmed report that a Swedish ship in the Gulf of Thailand has come under fire (from surface elements rather than aircraft). The Director asked for a compilation of Cambodian air and naval order of battle prior to today's NSC meeting, and Carver assured him that it is in preparation. The Director noted that ships passing Poulo Wai and Koh Tang Islands had been stopped by Cambodia prior to the seizure of the Mayaguez and asked Wilson to determine why intelligence on these earlier incidents hadn't been forthcoming in time to alert shipping.

EXTRACT FROM MORNING MEETING MINUTES OF 16 May 1975

Wilson reviewed the sequence of events in notifying top Government officials of the Mayaguez incident. He also reported that responsibility for issuing shipping advisories--formerly a Navy matter--now resides in the Hydrographic Office of the Defense Mapping Agency.

WARNING NOTICE
SENSITIVE INTELLIGENCE APPROCES
AND METHODS INVOLVED

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TAB E

Approved For Release 2003/10/22 : CIA-RDP83M00171R001800150001-2

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Report on Community Handling of
Mayaguez Incident

1. I convened a meeting today of operations/watch officers (or their representatives) from CIA, the White House Situation Room, NSA, the State Department, and DIA. Much of the conversation at that meeting confirmed information conveyed to you last night in a preliminary memorandum on the same subject. The conversation also helped to crystalize our own thinking about the alerting problem in general, and we offer you some conclusions and recommendations in para. 8 of this paper.

The Problem of Delay

2. The principal immediate problem seems to be: Why weren't the principals concerned notified of the contents of the initial CRITIC messages within 15 or so minutes of ^{the arrival of} these messages in the ops center? The first three messages arrived between 0512 and 0526 EDT. You were notified at 0630; Secretary Schlesinger learned of the messages some time between 0700 and 0730; General Scowcroft at 0730; the President around 0800 (courtesy of Mr. Peterson); and Secretary Kissinger some time after his regular morning staff meeting had begun at 0800.

Approved For Release 2003/10/22 : CIA-RDP83M00171R001800150001-2

TOP SECRET

Operations Centers delayed advising their principals for a variety of reasons, including: (1) concern that information provided in the initial CRITICs was inadequate, that further data was needed before principals could be properly briefed; (2) a belief that the US would be unable to react immediately, at least with force, and that therefore time was not of the essence*; and (3) related to this, a conviction that principals should not be awakened at home at, say, 0530 or 0600, when they could "just as well" be informed upon their arrival at the office at, say, 0700 or 0730.**

4. As far as we can tell, none of the principals were initially upset about receiving the news when they did, with the exception of Secretary Kissinger. The Secretary, by the way, may have first learned of the incident from the President, i. e., before he was briefed by his own people. (If so, this clearly was the fault of the State Operations Center, which did not make an effort to alert Kissinger's aides before his morning staff meeting.***)

* NMCC, for example, reportedly advised State ops around 0635 that, in view of the non-availability of US forces, the matter at that point was primarily diplomatic in nature.

** CIA ops officers were aware that you would probably awaken around 0630 and deliberately delayed informing you until about that time.

*** The State Ops Center, not INR, is charged with alerting the Secretary.

TOP SECRET

Approved For Release 2003/10/22 : CIA-RDP83M00171R001800150001-2

5. Some other problems, real or potential, have emerged from our investigation. NOIWON was not used, and all the operations centers agree with us that it should have been. The alerting mechanisms in both DoD and State are divided into operations and intelligence sections, which are supposed to be in close touch with one another but, in fact, sometimes are not. Finally, in this list, many INR Watch Officers are junior and inexperienced.

6. Yet another aspect of the problem deserves further attention, viz. the concepts and qualifications of individual operations/watch officers. Bureaucratic changes, the invigoration of NOIWON, and other conceivable proposals can only do so much if these officers are not aware of a truth propounded by [] (a truth which would seem to have some application to the events of yesterday):

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In a warning situation, the quality of indicators varies inversely with the potential seriousness of the event being reported on. If the latter is high, the warning threshold is reached with low quality indicators (indicators which under normal circumstances would be discounted).

The problem is to ensure that watch officers understand the relationship of these variables.

Some Non-Problems

7. Fortunately, the CRITIC system functioned as it should have. It notified the various Ops Centers immediately and automatically of the

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Approved For Release 2003/10/22 : CIA-RDP83M00171R001800150001-2

CRITIC messages. Further, within four minutes (by 0516 EDT), NSA/NSOC Operations Officers -- responsible for the functioning of the system -- had checked and confirmed that all Ops Centers were in possession of the messages. There seems to be no need to revise either NSCID No. 7 or DCID No. 7/1 (both dealing with critical intelligence communications). Moreover, there would seem to be little point as yet in seeking to attack the problem of "sovereign" operations centers head on. But we do have some notions of what might improve the community's ability to handle alerting problems of this (the Mayaguez incident) character.

Conclusions and Recommendations

8. We have already politely encouraged the several ops centers to reexamine their own procedures, look again at the effects of divided responsibilities (specifically in DoD and State), and consider the desirability of improving the qualifications of ops/watch officers in general and those on duty at night in particular. We suggest three additional measures for your consideration:

-- NOIWON should be strengthened. The IC Staff can propose ways to you and to USIB to ensure the functioning of the network during instant crises (e.g., any ops/watch officer who decides to alert his own principal can be required automatically to activate the net so as to inform the other centers of his decision). This, in turn, could

help to reduce delays in alerting.

Approved For Release 2003/10/22 : CIA-RDP83M00171R001800150001-2

4 TOP SECRET

Approved For Release 2003/10/22 : CIA-RDP83M00171R001800150001-2

-- The senior ops/watch officers in town should get to know one another better and should exchange experiences, problems, etc. (This seemingly minor proposal, if accepted, could produce substantial benefits for the community and its consumers.) I would be happy to play host for bimonthly luncheons dedicated to this purpose.

--- Finally, and most important, it seems to me to be both possible and appropriate for you to take action on your own to alert the President, Secretary Kissinger, and probably Secretary Schlesinger whenever you deem it desirable. It may be that in some instances your "alert" would prove to be redundant. But, as the Mayaguez incident demonstrated, perhaps not. If you concur, we will seek to provide you with a more detailed proposal.

Samuel V. Wilson
Lieutenant General, USA
Deputy to the DCI for the
Intelligence Community

TAB F

14 May 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Coverage of Events in the Gulf of Thailand
Prior to the Seizure of the Mayaguez

1. The first indication of a threat to shipping in the Gulf of Thailand was received by US operational forces on 4 May 1975. On that date, the USS GRIDLEY advised that it had received merchant ship communications reporting the capture of a Korean tanker by an "unidentified Communist ship" in an area in the general vicinity of Poulo Wai island (where the Mayaguez was subsequently captured). This report was immediately passed by the CINCPAC Intelligence Center to the NMCC which, in turn, immediately passed it to the CIA Operations Center. Because of CINCPAC's use of an "Address Indicator Group" (AIG 8724), it is safe to assume that its initial message also went to a large number of operational commands and intelligence centers within the Defense establishment. In any event, there is no evidence that anyone took any action on this report.

2. On 5 May, CINCPAC advised the NMCC (and other addressees) of a US news service report of the incident involving the Korean tanker. This report indicated a Cambodian Communist ship had fired upon, damaged, but failed to stop the Korean tanker. STATE/INR picked up this account of the news service report and a 5 May FBIS item from Seoul, which dealt with the same incident, and prepared a briefing paper for Mr. Hyland and Secretary Kissinger on the same day. No other element in the US intelligence community took any action.

3. On 6 May, the FBIS reported in its Daily Report that Seoul had advised the South Korean Ministry of Transportation to alert all Korean shipping to the dangers of Communist attacks "on the high seas of Cambodia."

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Approved For Release 2003/10/22 : CIA-RDP83M00171R001800150001-2

4. NSA reports (issued, interalia, to the community, beginning on 7 May) reveal that Cambodian attacks on foreign shipping actually began on 2 May. They also reveal that from 2 May until the seizure of the Mayaguez on 12 May, the Cambodians, in at least 5 separate incidents, either fired on or detained some 17 vessels (See Annex attached). One of these, a Panamanian freighter, was the subject of a 9 May NSA report, the gist of which was conveyed by Mr. Lehman of OCI during the DCI's morning staff meeting of that date. But we know of no other similar briefings or reports provided elsewhere in the community. (That same 9 May report also stated that, according to the master of the Panamanian vessel, the Cambodians had extended their territorial waters some 30 n.m. beyond Paulo Wai Island. There is no other evidence of such an extension.)

5. The seizure of the Mayaguez appears to have caught everyone by surprise. Neither CIA, DIA, nor the military services issued any report or analysis which would have indicated their consideration of a potential threat situation. No warning notices were issued.

6. The US agency responsible for issuing "notices to mariners" is the Hydrographic Center of the Defense Mapping Agency. There is no formal link between this agency and any current intelligence entity, and as far as we can ascertain at this juncture, intelligence concerning incidents in the Gulf of Thailand (2-12 May) was not sent to the Hydrographic Center by any element of the community.




** A call from my office to the DOTA at 1835 Hrs. tonight was answered by a recording.*

25X1A

Samuel V. Wilson
Lieutenant General, USA
Deputy to the DCI for the
Intelligence Community

ANNEX

Approved For Release 2003/10/22 : CIA-RDP83M00171R001800150001-2
 Reports of Cambodian Communist
 Actions Against Foreign Shipping in the Gulf of Thailand

| <u>DATE OF REPORT</u> | <u>DATE OF SEIZURE</u> | <u>VESSEL NATIONALITY</u> | <u>REMARKS</u> |
|--|--|---------------------------------|---|
| COMIPAC Message 041029Z | 4 May | South Korean | Report from USS GRIDLEY that Korean tanker being captured by unidentified communist ship near Poulo Wai Island. |
| COMIPAC Message 051112Z | 4 May (Same incident as above) | Same incident as above | Report by US News Service that a Cambodian communist ship fired upon but failed to stop Korean ship 200 n.m. S.E. of Thailand. |
| 5 & 6 May FBIS Reports | 4 May (Probably same incident as above) | South Korean (1 Vessel) | Seoul broadcasts reports of ship fired upon by communist boat. Official warning to all shipping of danger of attack "on the high seas of Cambodia." |
| 25X1 7 May  | 2 May | Thai (7 Vessels) | Seized in what Cambodian Communists describe as "our" territorial waters. Capture includes 27 Thai seamen. |
| 25X1 7 May  | 2 May | South Vietnamese (2 Vessels) | Seized in what Cambodian Communists describe as "our" territorial waters. Also captured entire crew. |
| 25X1 7 May  | 6 May | "Chinese" (6 Vessels) | Cambodian Communists report that vessels were "fleeing from Saigon, headed toward Thailand." Vessels were taken to Cambodian mainland. |

| <u>DATE OF REPORT</u> | <u>DATE OF SEIZURE</u> | <u>VESSEL NATIONALITY</u> | <u>REMARKS</u> |
|--------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| 25X1 8 May [REDACTED] | 6 May | South Vietnamese | All seven persons on board reportedly executed by Cambodian Communists. |
| 25X1 9 May [REDACTED] | 7 May | Panamanian | 94 Vietnamese/34 Thai on board. Master of vessel reported that vessel fired on without warning by Cambodian navy craft and detained 20 miles outside Poulo Wai, and also reported that the "new Cambodian boundary" had been extended 30 miles "outside" of Poulo Wai. (See Map.) Vessel departed Cambodian waters on 8 May. |

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